

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

LISTING OF CLAIMS:

1. (Previously Presented) An outer surface-inspecting method for inspecting an outer surface of an inspection area having repeated patterns through comparison with a predetermined master pattern, said method comprising:

dividing said inspection area having a rectangular shape into a plurality of matrix-like view areas;

classifying a master pattern, according to respective different edge shapes of said inspection area, into nine standard pattern portions involving four corner pattern portions each of which is applied to a respective corner portion of the inspection area and has two perpendicular edges defining the respective corner portion and an L-shaped outer area surrounding the perpendicular edges, four side pattern portions each of which is applied to a respective side of the inspection area and has a straight edge portion defining a vertical edge or a horizontal edge and an outer edge portion of the straight edge portion, and a central pattern portion without having an edge portion of the inspection area;

moving each of the side pattern portions relative to the inspection view areas along a peripheral portion of the inspection area having the repeated patterns between respective corner pattern portions, so as to be applied to respective matching inspection view areas of the peripheral portion;

applying the single central pattern portion to matching of each of the inspection view areas at a central portion for the central portion surrounded by each of the peripheral portions; and

inspecting the outer surface of the inspection area by comparing the standard pattern portions to the view areas corresponding to the classified standard pattern portions.

Claims 2-3. (Canceled)

4. (Original) The outer surface-inspecting method set forth in claim 1, wherein an object to be inspected is a semiconductor chip.

5. (Previously Presented) A master pattern to be used for comparison with an outer surface of an inspection area having repeated patterns for the purpose of inspecting said inspection area,

said master pattern comprising nine standard pattern portions involving four corner pattern portions each of which is applied to a respective corner portion of the inspection area and has two perpendicular edges defining the respective corner portion and an L-shaped outer area surrounding the perpendicular edges, four side pattern portions each of which is applied to a respective side of the inspection area and has a straight edge portion defining a vertical edge or a horizontal edge and an outer edge portion of the straight edge portion, and one central pattern portion without having an edge portion of the inspection area, according to different edge shapes of said inspection area contained in a plurality of matrix-like view areas, said

view areas being obtained by dividing said inspection area in horizontal and vertical directions,

wherein the outer surface of the inspection area is to be inspected by comparing the standard pattern portions to the outer surfaces of the view areas corresponding to the respective standard pattern portions.

Claims 6-7. (Canceled)

8. (Previously Presented) The master pattern set forth in claim 5, wherein an object to be inspected is a semiconductor chip.

9. (Currently Amended) An outer surface-inspecting apparatus used to inspect an outer surface of an inspection area having repeated patterns,

said outer surface-inspecting apparatus comprising a master pattern, said master pattern comprising nine standard pattern portions involving four corner pattern portions each of which applied to a respective corner portion of the inspection area and has two perpendicular edges defining the respective corner portion and an L-shaped outer area surrounding the perpendicular edges edge shape, four side pattern portions each of which is applied to a respective side of the inspection area and has a straight edge portion defining a vertical edge or a horizontal edge and an outer edge portion of the straight edge portion, and one central pattern portion without having an edge portion of the inspection area, according to different edge shapes of said inspection area having a rectangular

shape contained in a plurality of matrix-like view areas, said view areas being obtained by dividing said inspection area,

wherein the outer surface of the inspection area is to be inspected by comparing the standard pattern portions to the outer surfaces of the view areas corresponding to the respective standard pattern portions.